

**Testimony of Dr. William Weil**  
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**Committee on Great Lakes & Environment: 4/15/09**  
**Support for HB 4763-69, Safe Children's Products Act**

Representative Warren and members of the Committee on Great Lakes and Environment, I appreciate the opportunity to address you on House bills 4763 – 4769, the Safe Children's Products Act. I am a pediatrician and am currently a Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics and Human Development at the College of Human Medicine at Michigan State University. I have been involved with children's environmental health issues in Michigan since the widespread contamination of animal feed with PBB in the 1960s. (Weil, W.B.; Spencer, J.; Benjamin, D. and Seagull, E.: "The Effect of Polybrominated Biphenyl (PBB) on Infants and Young Children. J. Pediatrics 98:47-51, 1981). Since that time, I have worked with the CDC, the EPA and the state and national American Academy of Pediatrics on other environmental health issues involving infants and children and the impact on their mental and physical development. I have also trained many pediatricians throughout the state during my time at MSU.

Today I wish to address an important issue related to these concerns. The Children's Safe Products Act, House Bills 4763 – 4769.

Among the substances that are likely to be included for disclosure in the Safe Children's Products Act are heavy metals such as lead, mercury and arsenic as well as chemical compounds related to the PCBs, phthalates, and a variety of other chemicals now contaminating our ecosystems and our own bodies, especially those of infants and children.

Not only are our own bodies playing host to these toxic chemicals but our infants and children are much more at risk since their intake of foods, fluids and air are about twice that of adults per pound of body weight. But even more importantly, these small citizens take in relatively large amounts of dirt, dust, and other contaminated substances by hand to mouth routes and the mouthing of toys, plastics, bedding and clothing. Even breast milk is a source of remarkable concentrations of substances that can be toxic to their small bodies.

The relatively large intake of potentially harmful substances is particularly problematic since infants and children are most vulnerable to toxic chemicals.

**The organ systems of the infant and growing child are developmentally immature and rapidly growing and changing. Damage to the brain and other metabolic organs such as the liver, kidneys, heart and vascular system at this early period in their maturation can create defects in their development that may permanently impair their function into adolescence and into adult life as well as become a source of cancer and degenerative changes in function.**

**Although there are governmental agencies whose mission appear to be to keep such toxic products from entering our environment and bodies, the number of these compounds produced by industry and the weak laws on the books, has far exceeded the ability of existing regulations to meet the needs of our society. It is these discrepancies in the regulatory systems that have led to the need for a more precautionary approach to safeguarding our health and especially the health and safety of our children. An example of this problem is the enormous effort and lengthy time that was needed to remove the mercury preservatives from most children's vaccines, a preservative that had been in these medications for decades.**

**Two of the most important aspects of the proposed legislation are: 1) The ability to examine the most critical potential toxins as a group rather than attack the problem one chemical at a time. This group of laws sets up a credible and comprehensive, scientific way to assess chemicals that are of the most concern to children that may have direct exposure from children's product. 2) This legislation would empower parents and other consumers by making the information on product contamination available to the public in easily accessible sources. Parents I have worked with for decades would have greatly valued this opportunity to make their own choices about acceptable levels of risk of exposure to toxic chemicals. Currently, they have no way of knowing what toxic chemicals may be in children's products.**

**Thank you for the opportunity to address this legislation and I hope the committee and the legislature will approve and pass these bills rapidly.**